THE NEW
SUNDAY EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SUNDAY • APRIL 2, 2023 • ₹12.00 • PAGES 26 • LATE CITY EDITION

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PEOPLE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO AREAS NEAR FUKUSHIMA N-PLANT

Evacuation order lifted in two sections of Tomioka, a town near Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, on Saturday

DECONTAMINATED AND DECLARED SAFE

The reopening comes 12 years after an earthquake and tsunami triggered triple meltdowns at the nuclear plant, leading to a massive radiation leak that forced evacuation of 1,60,000 people. Tomioka is one of 12 towns that were designated as no-go zones. The two sections of the town that reopened were declared safe after extensive decontamination

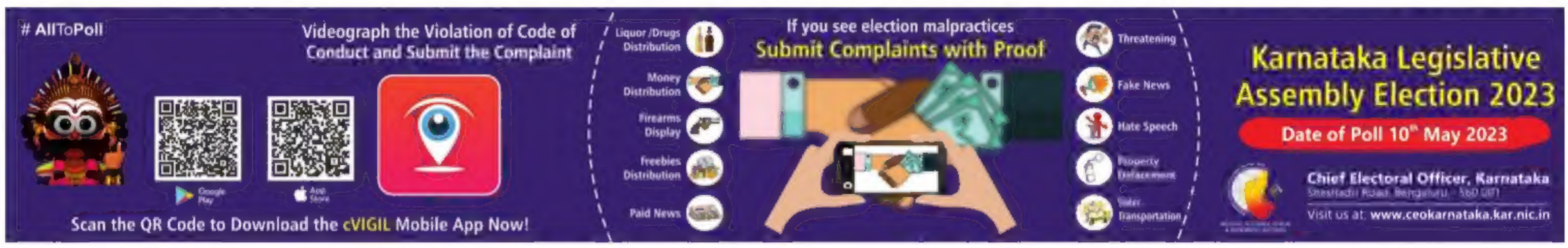
FEW FORMER RESIDENTS WANT TO RETURN

- As per surveys of former residents, most don't want to return as they have found jobs and settled elsewhere. Several areas of Tomioka reopened in 2017, but very few residents have returned
- The evacuation order was also lifted in several sections of Namie, another hard-hit town northwest of the plant, on Friday | PTI

4 sq km

THE COMBINED SIZE OF TWO SECTIONS WHERE RESTRICTIONS WERE LIFTED

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI



March of GST mop-up to 2nd highest peak

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

THE monthly Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection in March crossed ₹1.6 lakh crore, only for the second time since the implementation of the GST regime in July 2017. The government collected ₹160,122 crore in March 2023, which is 13% higher than that of in the same month last year. The peak GST collection was in April 2022, when the figure stood at ₹187,540 crore.

In 2022-23, the total GST collection was at a record high of ₹18.1 lakh crore, 22% more than the mop up the previous year. The average monthly collection in FY23, thus, crossed ₹1.5 lakh crore, which is significantly higher than the average monthly pool of ₹1.23 lakh crore in the previous year.

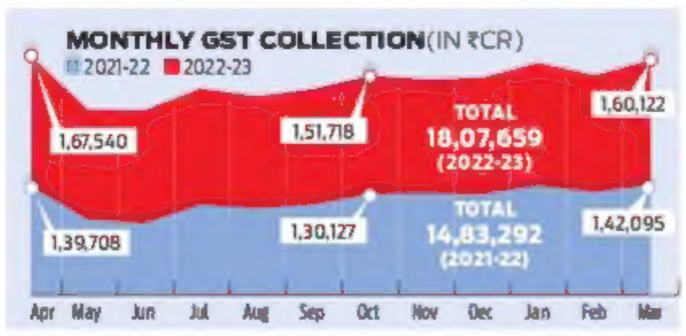
The surge in GST collection has been attributed to the overall jump in economic activity as well as better compliances, thanks to crackdown on tax evasion and illegal availing of input tax credit.

According to a finance ministry statement, the filing of returns during March 2023 was the highest-ever with 93.2% of the statement of invoices (in GSTR-1) and 91.4% of returns (in GSTR-3B) of February filed till March 2023 as compared to 83.1% and 84.7% respectively same month last year.

Vivek Jalan, partner in Tax Connect Advisory, said businesses have also realised that robust compliance is the only way forward under GST. "A significant boost in GST return filing taking the compliance ratio to more than 90% from early 80% shows that Indian businesses are fast moving into the mainstream," he said.

Of late, the government has increased its crackdown on GST evasion.

Recently, junior finance minister Pankaj Chaudhary informed Parliament that 13,500 cases of GST offences have been registered during April-February of the current financial year. In FY22, the corresponding number was 12,600.



'Fist of fury' in Cong office over ticket

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chikkamagaluru

CONGRESS workers reportedly exchanged blows at the District Congress Committee (DCC) office in Chikkamagaluru on Saturday over the issue of giving ticket to HD Thammaiah, who recently quit BJP and joined the Grand Old Party. District Congress Graduates and Teachers' unit president GB Pavan was reportedly manhandled at a meeting convened by Block Congress president HP Manje Gowda to resolve the issue related to allocation of party ticket for Chikkamagaluru Assembly constituency.

Ticket aspirants DL Vijayakumar, AN Mahesh, Mahadimane Sathish, Harish and CN Akmal were on the dais. Initiating the debate, Manje Gowda said party workers should work unitedly for the success of the candidate selected by the high command. Intervening at this juncture, supporters of Pavan demanded that the ticket for Chikkamagaluru seat be given to a loyal Congress leader and not to an "outsider". This led to a heated argument between supporters of Pavan and Manje Gowda. Tension prevailed when Pavan was allegedly manhandled by the supporters of Manje Gowda. The "move" to give ticket to Thammaiah led to dissatisfaction among many workers and the meeting was convened to resolve this issue. Without naming Thammaiah, party workers said only a loyal Congress candidate could take on BJP's CT Ravi and not an "outsider" who joined the party recently.

Moreover, voters desired for a change this time and hence, the party should field a loyal and formidable candidate. "We will remain neutral during campaigning if our appeal is ignored," they added. The meeting witnessed noisy scenes for some time and the enraged party workers walked out. P4

Pandemonium at a Congress meeting in Chikkamagaluru

We leave the issue of ticket allocation to the high command. We will work unitedly for the success of the candidate
KP Anshumanth, DCC president

EXPRESS READ

India's defence exports hit record ₹15,920 crore

New Delhi: India's export of military hardware reached an all-time high of Rs 15,920 crore in the financial year 2022-2023. That is a 10-fold increase over the Rs1,521 crore recorded in 2016-17. The key platforms India exported in 2022-23 include Dornier-228 aircraft, Brahmos missiles, and Akash missile system. "It's a remarkable achievement," Defence Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted. | P9

Gowda says Hassan ticket not for Bhavani

Hassan: JDS supremo HD Deve Gowda has delivered a blow to his elder son HD Revanna by backing his other son HD Kumaraswamy on giving the Hassan Assembly ticket to a common party worker and not to Revanna's wife Bhavani. Party sources said that Gowda strongly opposed Bhavani's candidature. Though HP Swaroop's name is doing the rounds, Revanna is opposed to it | P4

NHAI does U-turn, rolls back e-way toll hike order

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

OFFICIALS of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Saturday withdrew the hike in Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway toll fee in view of widespread criticism.

This means motorists will continue to pay Rs 135 for a single journey on the Bengaluru-Nidaghatta section. The officials said, "The toll revision for this stretch will be done at a later stage. The proposal will be sent to the authorities concerned and a committee of experts to study it before taking a final decision. We will review the situation after some time."

Earlier, NHAI said the revision was part of the annual exercise done across the country.

However, motorists and social activists opposed the hike stating that toll started only from March 14. On March 27, the NHAI issued a notification announcing the revision of expressway toll. It had announced that the toll would go up to Rs 165, a hike of Rs 30.

Some officials and experts said that the decision has been withdrawn in view of the Assembly elections in the state.

Reacting to the NHAI's move to withdraw its decision on toll revision, Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha took to social media and said that the toll hike has been put on hold and it will be revised after work on service roads is completed.

The expressway has been in the news since its inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 12.

Georgia first US state to pass Hinduphobia resolution

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

GEORGIA'S Assembly has passed a resolution condemning Hinduphobia and anti-Hindu bigotry, making it the first US state to take such a legislative measure.

Condemning anti-Hindu bigotry, the resolution stated that Hinduism is one of the world's largest and oldest religions with over 1.2 billion adherents in over 100 countries and encompasses an array of diverse traditions and belief systems with values of acceptance, mutual respect, and peace.

It was introduced by Lauren McDonald and Todd Jones from Forsyth County in the suburbs of Atlanta.

Claiming that there were instances of hate crimes against Hindu-Americans over the last few decades across the country, the resolution said Hinduphobia is exacerbated and institutionalised by some in academia who support the dismantling of Hinduism and accuse its sacred texts and cultural practices of violence and oppression.

On March 22, the Atlanta chapter of the Coalition of Hindus of North America, had organised the first-ever Hindu Advocacy Day, which was attended by around 25 lawmakers. Both Republicans and Democrats were present at the event that helped understand the community's concerns.

India, Malaysia trade can now be done in INR

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

TRADE between India and Malaysia can now be settled in Indian Rupee in addition to the current modes of settlement, the foreign office announced on Saturday. This follows a decision by the Reserve Bank of India in July last year to allow settlement of international trade in Indian currency.

The initiative is aimed at stimulating the interest of the global trading community in the Indian Rupee by weaning them off the US dollar. India International Bank of Malaysia, based in Kuala Lumpur, has operationalised it by opening a Special Rupee Vostro Account through its corresponding bank in India, which is the Union Bank of India. Malaysia is the 27th largest investor in India with foreign direct investment of $1,161 million from April 2000 to September 2022. Bilateral trade touched $13.86 billion in April-November 2022. This includes exports worth $4.9 billion.

"This new mechanism is also aligned with Malaysia's foreign exchange policies as part of which Malaysian banks are allowed to undertake settlement of international trade in goods or services in any foreign currency, subject to the rules and regulations of Bank Negara Malaysia," the Indian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur said. The mechanism will allow Indian and Malaysian traders to invoice their trade in rupees.

Sidhuisms walk out of jail with Centre & Mann in line of fire

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

WITH cricketer-turned-Congress neta Navjot Singh Sidhu walking out of the Patiala Central Jail on Saturday evening, it was time for his usual dose of Sidhuisms.

Sentenced to a year in prison over the death of Gurnam Singh in a 1988 road-rage case, he was granted remission after 10 months in prison due to his good behaviour.

Alliterations and punch-lines flowed freely as the former Punjab Congress president trained his guns at the BJP-led Central government, saying democracy is now in chains and institutions have turned slaves. "Whenever dictatorship came in the country, a revolution came, and today, I say the revolution's name is Rahul Gandhi. The workers of the Congress party are not ice blocks that will melt away. Today, the democracy is trapped badly in tentacles," he said. Sidhu also alleged that the Centre is engaged in a conspiracy to impose President's rule in Punjab.

"Wherever the idea of Hindutva doesn't work or where the power is held by a minority community, the Centre indulges in conspiracy," he said.

Referring to the Sikh community, he said, "In Punjab, where there is rule by a minority community, the Centre has hatched a conspiracy. First, a law and order problem is created. Then there is an attempt to control it and claim they have brought peace."

He also lashed out CM Bhagwant Mann. "I want to remind Mann that you said so much before forming the government. You sold false dreams. One lakh jobs promised are yet to be delivered. What about regularising 36,000 professors? You're just a newspaper CM," he quipped.

Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu emerges from the Patiala jail | PTI

HERO FOR HACKERS

RRI BREAKTHROUGH TO MAKE ONLINE TRANSACTIONS SAFE

The present demonstration is in continuation to the QuIC lab's QKD established between 2 buildings on the RRI campus using an atmospheric free space channel in February 2021
RRI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A TEAM of researchers from Bengaluru-based Raman Research Institute (RRI) has discovered a secure quantum communication link that is set to help India design and develop secure communication channels, especially for defence and strategic purposes, enhance cyber security and even make online transactions and remote electronic voting much safer. It has become the first Indian team to achieve this breakthrough.

According to experts, quantum communication protects data by using the laws of quantum physics, which allow quantum particles like photons to transmit data. The particles, called quantum bits, or 'qubits', are extremely fragile in the quantum state. If a hacker interferes when these particles are in transit, the latter's fragility prevents a successful hacking as their attempt to persist, exposes them through signatures of their activity, helping identify the hacking process and alerting the cybersecurity mechanism to pull the plug on the data transmission.

The Indian breakthrough has come as part of the Quantum Experiments using Satellite Technology (QuEST) project for which RRI has been collaborating with the UR Rao Satellite Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) since 2017.

The RRI researchers successfully achieved a secure quantum communication established between a stationary source and a moving receiver using Quantum Key Distribution, demonstrating that it can now pave the way for ground-to-satellite-based secure quantum communication in the future. This was done to simulate an earth-orbiting communication satellite and a stationary ground station with which it maintains communication links. P5